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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5908
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0653
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - MEDIA REACTION

South and Central Asia: Afghanistan

"Lives on the Line"

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo editorialized (05/05): "The Afghan situation is getting increasingly worse. Outside the capital, Kabul, many parts of the country are largely under the control of the Taliban, which is rapidly expanding its influence over the southeastern area bordering Pakistan. It is understandable that the U.S., which is in desperate need of help, has asked the ROK, one of its allies, to offer assistance. However, any decision to dispatch Korean troops to Afghanistan should not be based purely on loyalty. The lives of Koreans are at stake. ... Once in Afghanistan, soldiers will have to risk their lives to fight Taliban soldiers, which is why we cannot be too careful about future redeployment. This is also the reason why America's European allies have been reluctant to embrace U.S. calls for help in Afghanistan."

"U.S., ROK Should Put Cooperation on North Korea before Cooperation on Afghanistan"

Moderate Seoul Shimun editorialized (05/06): "The U.S. administration should look favorably towards the ROKG's measures to support Afghanistan, which came after Seoul's serious consideration of public opinion against troop redeployment and its role as a U.S. ally. Washington should refrain from pressuring the ROKG by demanding excessive financial aid because Seoul does not send its troops to Afghanistan or by requesting troop deployment again. Separately from the decision on the Afghan issue, the ROKG should make every effort to call the attention of the Obama Administration to the North Korean issue. ... The Obama Administration's strategy of ignoring North Korea should be seen as part of its efforts to focus on foreign policy priorities regarding Iran and Afghanistan, rather than be dragged along by North Korea. ... The ROKG must focus the attention of the U.S. administration on North Korea and at the same time enhance the cooperative framework with the U.S. in order to devise the right policy toward North Korea. Cooperation on North Korea should come before the Afghan issue."

STANTON